

Good day.

My name is Jim Pedersen and I work for the International Union UAW in the Community Action Program department. I am testifying to the UAW's strong opposition to this package of bills, HB 5023, 5024, 5025 and 5026, as they are unnecessary, redundant and violate union members' US and Michigan Constitutional rights of free speech and association.

And I'm compelled to point out the irony of this hearing on bills designed to interfere with and denigrate public sector unions happening on the day after the Martin Luther King holiday. Rev. King was martyred in Memphis TN while supporting striking public sanitation workers, and it's safe to say he would oppose these bills.

There isn't a problem of union strikes or work stoppages in Michigan. Strikes by public employees are prohibited and extremely rare. Public union employees understand the great risk that already exists if they strike. State employees have just come through one of the most difficult bargaining sessions in our history, with all state employee unions acting responsibly, negotiating an equitable contract with shared sacrifices that establishes a New Solutions framework for labor/management cooperative efforts to make state government work better and more efficiently. There simply have been no strikes or work stoppages during this very difficult period. To create unnecessary laws which simply restate and restructure existing regulations and increase penalties is not good governance.

HB 5025 would force an annual authorization for deduction of union dues, but exempt agency fees paid by non-members from this annual requirement. Besides being illegal, because it treats union dues differently from other monies paid by employees to a bargaining agent, and it's preempted by federal law, this bill creates a particularly onerous and burdensome regulation, which is the opposite of what we should be doing to create jobs. Unions are extraordinarily democratic institutions. A majority vote of affected employees must vote for a union before it can be formed. Union officials are elected by majority vote, in elections that typically feature high levels of participation. Unions negotiate dues deduction language with employers, and the contract is subject to ratification by the members covered by the contract. Why would the Michigan Legislature want to interfere with this open, legal, transparent and democratic process? This bill seems to be aimed at harassing unions by forcing them to spend a lot of time on paper work, rather than serving the interests of the working men and women who elect them.

HB 5026 is also likely preempted by federal law, is unnecessary and not in the best interests of workers on either side of a labor dispute. Workers applying for jobs to replace strikers should know the hazards they face, in terms of being terminated when the strike is settled, facing the wrath of coworkers, neighbors and the community for engaging in strikebreaking, and job applicants should be able to make an informed decision whether or not to scab. Employees that are considering a strike should be made aware of any advertisement for their replacements. Employers that depend on the image of goodwill in a community must consider the impact on that goodwill by a public statement of the intent to hire striker replacements. The requirement to notify of a labor dispute in advertisements for scabs is an incentive for all sides to settle, and should not be removed.